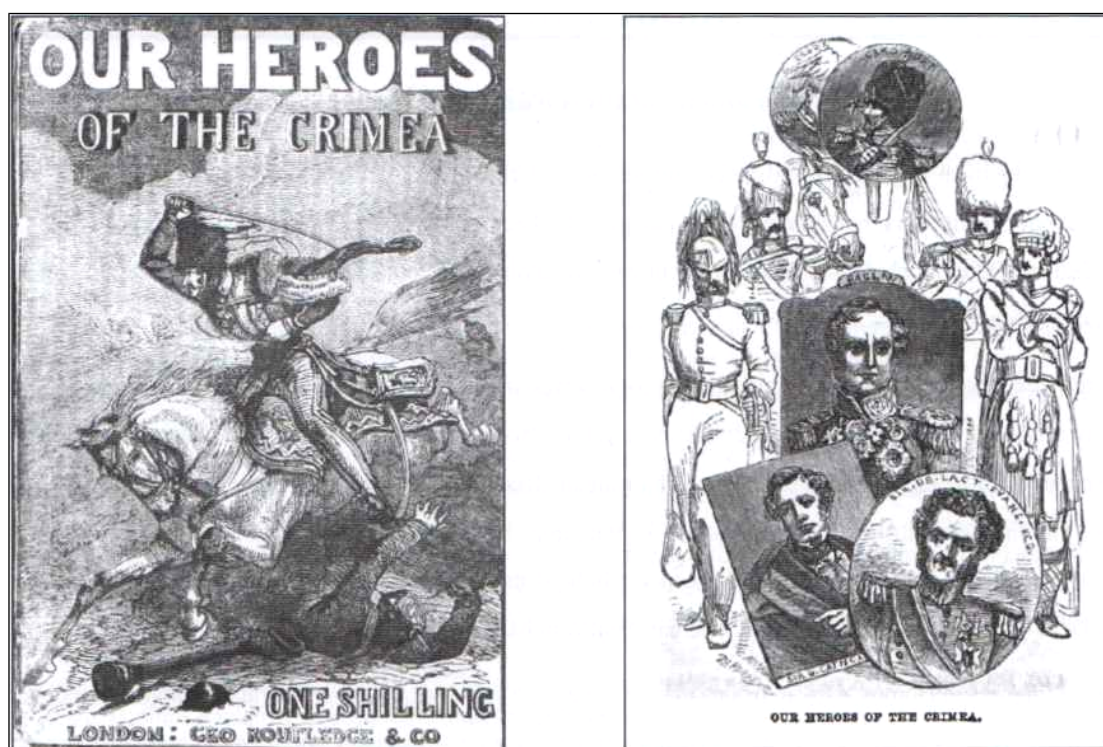


41 George Ryan's Crimean War books
by Dr Douglas J Austin **41** **[TWC 32(1) p20 2014]**

George Ryan was a reporter on the '*Weekly Dispatch*' newspaper in London during the mid-1850s. As yet, I have no further details of his life and career. Apparently a Fleet Street hack - and well-connected with the British Army - he produced four publications related to the Crimean War, all now rare in the original. The COPAC Library Catalogue (<http://copac.ac.uk/>) shows three of them as follows:- "*Our heroes of the Crimea: being biographical sketches of our military officers, from the General Commanding-in-Chief to the subaltern*", London : Routledge, 1855. (5 copies), "*The lives of our heroes of the Crimea*", London : James Field, 1855. (2 copies) and "*Was Lord Cardigan a hero at Balaklava? Verbatim from the guinea edition of the lives of our heroes of the Crimea, with startling additions*", London : James Field, 1855. (2 copies). His fourth publication was "*The Life of Major-General Estcourt, Adjutant-General of the Army in the East*" from "*The lives of our heroes of the Crimea*", London, James Field, 1856. (The first and fourth are readily available on-line as 'Full View' Google Books.) These books, particularly "*Our Heroes...*" (54 names: 192 pp : 1855: 1s 0d.) and "*The Lives...*" (57 names: 408 pp : Preface dated 12th July, 1855: £1 1s.) merit close inspection by Crimean War buffs.



The low-priced "*Our heroes...*", first advertised in '*The Times*' for 26 February 1855, appears to have sold well (my own copy is described as "*The Fourteenth Thousand*"). Clearly, Ryan hoped for good profits from the vastly higher-priced "*The Lives...*" and "*Was Lord Cardigan...*". He writes in an entertaining and high-flown Victorian style and it is interesting to compare the alterations in his treatment of Lord Cardigan over his series of books. In 25 pages of "*Our heroes...*", while retailing many of the dubious incidents (public rather than personal) of Cardigan's earlier life, he is accorded the most fulsome praises for his actions in the Charge of the Light Brigade - in line with the public adulation current in early 1855. The tone and content follow Ryan's wildly inaccurate news report of November, 1854 (as shown below). It concludes:- "It may be said, without fear of contradiction, that the Earl of Cardigan is now the most popular soldier in England. As a gallant chevalier he won his golden spurs in a tilt with giants. All salute him as the lion of the British army; and a clasp to the Crimean medal will tell how he led heroes to fight on that bloody field, which gives to the world

an example of devoted valour unequalled in warfare... His lordship has been appointed Inspector-General of Cavalry, and is re-organizing that arm of the service for the Crimea. He will return to the field when called upon."

In stark contrast, 35 pages of "*The Lives...*" (published on 12 July, 1855) replace those praises with:- "We now come to the most important period in the Earl of Cardigan's career, that of the 25th of October, 1854. For the affair of that day he is receiving ovations from all conditions of men at home, to the chagrin of many brave officers in the Crimea who took a greater share in its dangers than did Lord Cardigan, and who are still there ready to fight. He reaps all the glory, and by his own speeches he would seem to deserve it all." In the most flowery of language, Ryan (with errors of his own) proceeds to excoriate Cardigan for what he considers gross mis-statements and hypocrisy and adds, for good measure, an interesting quotation from '*The Times*' for 9th July, 1855:- "Cabs and omnibuses were permitted to go by unmolested, but the only exception otherwise made was in favour of the Earl of Cardigan, who was recognized as he drove past, and who seems to enjoy a degree of popularity among the London mob, which those who know the real nature of his services in the East, may be excused for wondering at."

My present concern is with Ryan's "startling additions" as given (in part) in the preface to "*Was Lord Cardigan...*" which reads as follows:- "In the columns of the '*Weekly Dispatch*,' and but one month after the battle of Balaklava, under the heading of "*Leading Men of the War*", I wrote the following:- "In this glorious and bloody encounter, the Earl of Cardigan cut down the enemy right and left. Support, at the moment he had succeeded in destroying the Russian gunners and the massacre of our little band would at least have been rewarded by thrice the number of guns they were ordered to recover. At one moment his lordship was within the certainty of being killed by a Russian lance thrust at his side. One of his subalterns, however, struck the weapon down, and in its descent it merely inflicted a slight wound in the calf of his lordship's right leg. The gallant soldier returned to England in January last, where he was hailed as one worthy of the great country for whose glory he had fought, and as a soldier entitled to every honour it is in the power of his sovereign to bestow upon him." I had so written on the faith of the public journals. I have now corrected the sham, on the unquestionable evidence of eyewitnesses to the Earl of Cardigan's heroism at Balaklava."

Why do I publish this memoir of Lord Cardigan in a popular form? For this reason. Within two days of the last sheet of my guinea edition of "*The Lives of our Heroes of the Crimea*" going to press, I was waited on by a gentleman with whom I had long been on terms of intimacy, and who, to my knowledge, had for years enjoyed the privilege of obtaining early information at the Horse Guards, for the columns of the London Newspapers. He was accompanied by a mutual acquaintance. There were three of us in council. I give the dialogue:-

Emissary:- "I come to you at the request of a gentleman at the Horse Guards, with regard to your book advertised in the Times and Morning Post. Do not be offended with me, for I told him that knowing you well, I might as well engage to stop the payments of the Bank of England, as hope to dissuade you from doing that which you had made up your mind to; but as he begged of me to see you, and reason with you, I have come, and here is Mr. — with me, as a guarantee of my good faith in this matter."

Author. - "Pray, who sent you to me?"

Emissary. - "You will excuse my not informing you."

Author. - "Go back and repeat your reply as to stopping the payments of the Bank of England."

Both gentlemen withdrew; but on the next day the Emissary returned to the attack. I abridged very materially the excellent reasons he had been primed to advance, by at once informing him that I should some day make public his proposition. I have now done so, and at a price enabling all

classes to read. The Horse Guards can be at no loss to discover the name and whereabouts of the person to whom I point. If he was not instructed to come to me, then does he deserve notice from those whom it may concern; but if commissioned, as he represented, to bribe me to hoodwink truth, his hirers will have seen how abortive were his efforts.

I am quite regardless whether the discharge of my duty please the few or offend the many. I fear neither the frowns of the great nor the murmurs of the mob; I have elected to stand by truth and the honour and glory of the British army, against brazen-faced imposture. Let it not be said that I have dealt either unfairly or harshly with the Earl of Cardigan. His lordship and his friends who were with him in his yacht, on the 5th of November last, will admit that in maintaining silence as to what took place on board when news of the attack on our position before Sebastopol was communicated, is downright merciful. I had only dealt with him for Balaklava; for that huge imposition he had received greetings, banquets, and honours. I execrated the imposture. For Inkermann Lord Cardigan had taken nothing, and I would have allowed his heroism on that rich red day, to bask in the sunshine of obscurity, but that by speaking out, I wish to hurl defiance at the writers of some twenty threatening letters. Poor Satraps! I give them right royal testimony to the truth of Inkermann; let them settle it with the Duke of Cambridge. I was mild in all I had said of Balaklava - the Earl of Cardigan's admirers say otherwise; they will in this special edition find something new in relation to the 25th of October. They thought I had exhausted my information; miserables, I have not even here given you all, though, for your stomachs, more than may be healthy.

All I allege here is fact, and capable of being proven in the proper place, and whenever I may be called upon, provided the call be made while evidence liveth. Geo. Ryan. London, August 9th, 1855."

We are perhaps unlikely ever to learn the identity of the 'Emissary' but we may one day learn more of Cardigan's scandalous absence from the field of Inkerman. From Ryan's additions and from '*The Times*' advertisements quoted below, it does appear that Ryan was put under considerable pressure not to publish, but he went right ahead and did so. (Good for him, I say!).

25 July 1855:- Now being published, fcp. 8vo., handsomely bound in morocco, price £1 1s. WAS Lord CARDIGAN a Hero at BALAKLAVA? - See RYAN's LIVES of OUR HEROES of the Crimea. The author, by dealing truthfully and fearlessly with the services of our officers, tears sham heroism into tatters. James Field and Co., publishers, 12, Beaufort-buildings, Strand.

16th October, 1855:- Price 1s. WAS Lord CARDIGAN a HERO at BALAKLAVA? Verbatim from the guinea edition of that most extraordinary work, "Ryan's Lives of our Heroes of the Crimea" with startling additions. From the Sun newspaper September 25: - "*The author is of opinion his lordship was not, and adduces startling reasons (ill or well founded) for thinking so, at the same time challenging contradiction with the utmost boldness. The inquiry is taken from the guinea edition of the preceding work, and contains remarkable additions.*" Also, Ryan's Lives of our Heroes of the Crimea. Verbatim from the guinea edition, price 3s. 6d., cloth lettered, 416 pages. For the heartless treatment of Sir De Lacy Evans by the late Duke of Wellington, for a life of Lord Raglan written with the iron pen of truth, for a life of the cruelly used Earl of Lucan, for a life of the chivalrous Viscount Chewton, for a life of the glorious Sir George Cathcart and a soul-stirring picture of his heroic charge at Inkerman, wherein he died for England and European liberty, read "*Ryan's Lives of our Heroes of the Crimea.*" This work, which contains the lives of 56 British heroes, should be in the hands of all whose sympathies are with our brave defenders in the East.

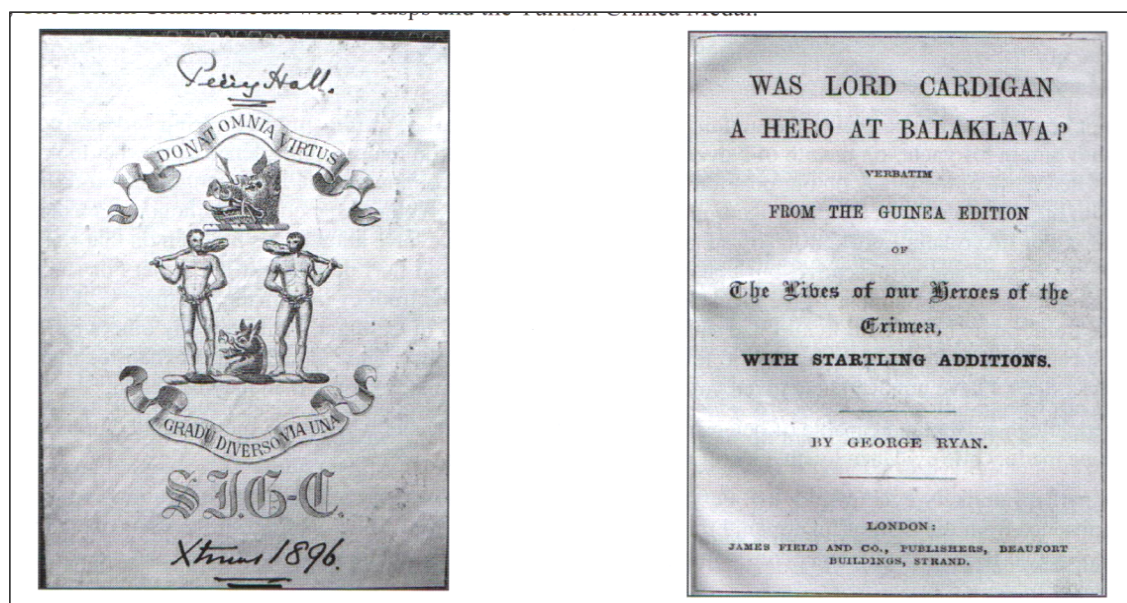
From the "*Sun*" newspaper, September 25:- "*A cheap edition of this popular work, which cannot be perused without emotion, so heroic are most of the careers therein recorded. It is but just, while*

creditable to Mr. Ryan, that the chivalry of the humble subaltern should thus be associated with that of his military superiors." London, James Field and Co., 12, Beaufort-buildings, Strand; and all booksellers and railway stations.

16 November, 1855:- Second Volume. RYAN'S LIVES of OUR HEROES of the CRIMEA. The author begs to acquaint all correspondents that communications relating to a forthcoming second volume, are to be addressed for him to James Field and Co., publishers, 12, Beaufort-buildings, Strand. To hundreds of enquirers the author takes the opportunity of replying that no criminal prosecution has been or dare be instituted against him for having written the truth -thanks to Lord Campbell's Act, and the unswerving honesty of British officers.

16 November, 1855:- [Advertisement.] - Price One Shilling - "*Was Lord Cardigan a Hero at Balaklava.*" - Verbatim from the guinea edition of "*Ryan's Lives of Our Heroes of the Crimea.*" Undue efforts having been made to deter booksellers from supplying this most extraordinary memoir, the public are hereby informed that a shilling and postage beadf (?), enclosed in an envelope, addressed to the publishers, will secure its delivery in any part of the united kingdom. Postage stamps not taken in payment. London, James Field and Co., 12, Beaufort-buildings, Strand. Also a cheap reprint of the entire guinea work - cloth, 3s 6d.

As a coda, my own copy of "*Was Lord Cardigan...*" [x + 66 pp : Preface dated August 9th, 1855: handsomely bound in morocco: £1 1s.] carries a fine bookplate, which shows that it was once the property of "S J. G-C.", with the hand-written inscriptions "Perry Hall" and "Xmas 1896". The device of a boar's head pierced with an arrow and the mottoes *Donat omnia virtus* (Virtue gives all) and *Gradu diverso via una* (The same road by different steps) identifies it as belonging to a member of the Gough-Calthorpe family. This modest (but inflammatory) small book may well have been an amusing Christmas present to Somerset John Gough-Calthorpe (1831-1912). He was the fourth son of Frederick, fourth Baron Calthorpe, and of Lady Charlotte Sophia Somerset, eldest daughter of the sixth Duke of Beaufort. He was a grand-nephew of Lord Raglan and was on his personal staff as an A.D.C. in the Crimea, which he left following Raglan's death on 29 June, 1855. He was awarded the Legion d'Honneur 5th Class, the Order of the Medjidie 5th Class, The British Crimea Medal with 4 clasps and the Turkish Crimea Medal.



He published several editions of "*Letters from Headquarters; or the Realities of the War in the Crimea*", John Murray, London, from December, 1856. Lord Cardigan alleged that Calthorpe libelled him in this work and, in 1863, tried to secure an application for a criminal information, which was heard in the Court of Queen's Bench but failed on a technicality. In 1910, Calthorpe succeeded his brother, Augustus Cholmondeley Gough-Calthorpe, as 7th Baron Calthorpe. In addition to his seat in the Isle of Wight, he also had a residence at Perry Hall, near Birmingham. (Perry Hall Mansion in Baltimore County, Maryland, was once owned by a member of the Gough family.) The Calthorpe title became extinct in 1997, on the death of the 10th Baron.